

TOWN of DARIEN  
MONUMENTS & CEREMONIES COMMISSION  
Town Hall, 2 Renshaw Road, Darien, Connecticut 06820



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## Monuments and Ceremonies Commission

### Minutes of the October 13, 2009 Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 3:35 P.M. by Chairman Phil Kraft with Commissions Edward Carabillo, Marian Castell, John Geoghegan, David Polett, Karen Polett, Bob Riith, Charles Scribner, and George Walsh present.

Name from Lauren to Michelle DeSoiza from the September 8, 2009 minutes was corrected. Minutes corrected and approved on a motion by Dave Polett, second Charles Scribner. The Chairman noted that Michelle was responsible for the formation of the SOS (Support Our Soldiers) group which staged the Ocean of Flags at the Darien High School. Each flag represented 500 lost soldiers during our Nation's wars. Michelle will be asked to be our Speaker for Memorial Day, 2010. Bob Riith mentioned Gene OFiero as a possibility for Grand Marshal for the Memorial Day Parade in 2010. Gene is a retired custodian from Ox Ridge School.

Chairman Kraft mentioned that although the Selectman's Secretary, Grace retired recently, the alerts for our Commission are still on her computer and will be followed up on by her replacement.

Commissioners thanked John for obtaining parts for the display case. Spare parts are in the mail room in case additional shelving is needed.

Dave Polett explained the Wreath Across America schedule for this December. The caravan will arrive Wednesday, December 9, and after stopping at the VFW, a contingent will place a wreath at the Darien Town Hall. Local politicians will be invited. The Masonic groups from both Darien and New Canaan will provide funds for the dinner scheduled for the evening of December 9, at the VFW. Cindy Tanner will cater this dinner as in the past. The Wreaths Across America caravan will hold a brief ceremony at Darien High School on the early morning of Thursday, December 10, with participation from the SOS student group, administrators, faculty and possibly the Tudor Singers. Donna Russo is working on this with Phil Kraft and Dave Polett. The 7 ceremonial wreaths will be placed at the Spring Grove Veteran's Cemetery at noon on Saturday, December 12. Commissioners are asked to attend and to help with the placement of additional wreaths prior to noon ceremony.

Veteran's Day this year will be celebrated at 11:00 A.M. on November 11, at the Veteran's Memorial Circle in front of the Darien Town Hall. Phil will be at Ox Ridge School, Hindley and the Middle School on November 10. The Veteran's Day ceremony will be televised by Channel 79, so that the students can see the live stream. There will also be a flag raising ceremony at 8 A.M. at Darien High School on November 11. Students are in school on November 11, this year.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:20 P.M. on a motion by John Geoghegan, second George Walsh.

Submitted by,

*Karen K. Polett*  
Karen K. Polett,

Secretary

*Donna*

# Kraft's work recognized by Klein, town

By Maggie Gordon  
mgordon@bcnnew.com

With only Evonne Klein and Seth Morton present, the Board of Selectmen did not have enough board members to reach a quorum at its regular meeting on Monday night, and therefore could not take action on any of the items listed on the agenda.

Callie Sullivan, David Bayne and Linda Santarella were unable to attend due to a combination of illnesses and personal reasons, Klein said at the start of the meeting.

The meeting began when Klein declared Tuesday, Oct. 20, 2009 Phillip Kraft Day in the Town of Darien. Klein described Kraft as a "tireless volunteer" and a "man of many hats."

The proclamation was made "in recognition of [Kraft's] many years of dedication and service to the United States of America and to all its veterans and for being a friend who will reach out a hand to anyone and let him or her know everything will be OK," Klein said.

Kraft, who served in the U.S.

Army Vietnam Special Services, is the former secretary and current chairman of Darien's Monuments & Ceremonies Commission, program director of the National Veterans Services Fund and is commander of Darien's Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6933.

Following the proclamation, the two members of the board listened as Jenny Schwartz, chairwoman of the Darien Housing Authority, made a presentation on behalf of the DHA advocating a possible tax exemption for affordable housing.

The board will take action on the presentation at its next regular meeting on Monday.

Nicole Bernam, an engineer with Milone & MacBroom, then made a presentation of her findings regarding the Goodwives River Watershed.

"Our goals are to evaluate flooding, to identify areas of flooding, to identify potential causes and identify a long-term plan that the town can use and implement to remedy the causes of flooding," Bernam told those in attendance.

Throughout the presentation,

she and her co-worker, Darren Overton, presented information about the watershed, and identified five problem areas that contribute to the town's flooding problems. The five areas are: Goodwives River Road and Upstream Dam; a driveway at 6 Andrews Drive; the Tokeneke Road area; the shopping plaza at Old Kings Highway North and Overbrook Road, according to Overton.

The team then proposed possible ways to improve the waterflow in those areas.

Bernam told the board she is planning to deliver a draft report to the town during the week of Nov. 2, hold a public information meeting during the week of Nov. 16 and incorporate comments and finalize the report by Nov. 30.

The meeting ended with an update on the flood mitigation efforts by Director of Public Works Bob Steeger, who said he plans to forward a proposal to study the Noroton River watershed to the Board of Selectman within the next week.



Fran Into, Treasurer CT DAR  
Connecticut Daughters of the American Revolution

September, 2009

Dear Friend,

This year will mark the 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Wreaths Across America ceremonies and holiday wreaths being placed on veteran's gravestones in Arlington National Cemetery and around the world in honor of our veterans who have served our country and preserved our freedom. **Simultaneously with the ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery on Saturday, December 12<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 noon EST, Wreaths Across America ceremonies will be held at the three CT State Veterans' Cemeteries: State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown; Col. Raymond Gates Memorial Cemetery, Rocky Hill; and Spring Grove Veterans Cemetery, Darien.** Additionally, ceremonies will also take place in many towns and cemeteries across Connecticut.

The mission of Wreaths Across America [www.wreathsasscrossamerica.org](http://www.wreathsasscrossamerica.org) is: To Honor, Remember and Teach our children the value of our freedom – one veteran at a time - by sponsoring a **wreath (\$15 each)** to be placed on the gravestone during these ceremonies. There are over 6,000 veterans buried in the State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown (code CTMVCM) and over 1500 buried each in Col Raymond Gates Memorial Cemetery, Rocky Hill (code CTCRGR); **and Spring Grove Veterans Cemetery, Darien (code CTSGVD).** Contributions for wreaths to be placed on gravestones can be made through CTDAR State Treasurer, Fran Into, 16 Highland Green, Cromwell, CT 06416 (checks should be made out to Wreaths Across America). Sponsorship may also be done on-line at [www.wreathsasscrossamerica.org](http://www.wreathsasscrossamerica.org) by entering the cemetery code of your choosing (noted above) and CTDAR0002 as the sponsoring group, so that the maximum number of wreaths will be sent to the location of your choosing.

Feel free to contact me with any questions or for assistance. Please plan on coming to one of these ceremonies to Honor and Remember our Veterans. Please cut out the order portion below and mail with your check.

Sincerely,  
*Fran Into*

*Cut out the section below and mail with your check*

Amount of check \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of wreaths \_\_\_\_\_  
Darien Code CTSGVD  
Mail to: CTDAR Fran Into  
16 Highland Green  
Cromwell, CT 06416  
Your name and address \_\_\_\_\_



# Historians plant oak from Civil War

An oak sapling from the Gettysburg Battlefield was planted Saturday at the site of the Fitch's Home For Soldiers on Noroton Avenue.

The tree, which originally grew on the Civil War Battlefield at Gettysburg, Pa., was obtained by Congressman Christopher Shays and shipped to Robert E. Fatterley, one of Darien's historians, who asked Congressman Shays to get the tree donated to the town.

The ceremony, held on the date of the original Memorial Day on May 30, observed the sacrifices made by members of the Armed Forces and others in preserving the USA, and to express gratitude to a Darien resident — Benjamin Fitch — who, in 1864 donated five acres of his land in Darien and \$100 thousand to build a home on it to benefit the soldiers, sailors and other veterans of the Civil War and their widows and families.

A monument at the site of the Fitch's Home is maintained by the

Darien Monuments and Ceremonies Committee marking the location of the parade ground at the home. The plaque on it describes the patriotic fervor of Benjamin Fitch which moved him to establish while the Civil War raged, the first Veterans' Home in the United States. For many years, it provided a home for those who suffered from that conflict.

Later, the State of Connecticut assumed the financial responsibility and in 1940 the home was moved from Darien to Rocky Hill where it survives as the Connecticut Veterans' Home and Hospital. Many Connecticut veterans of the Civil War were cared for at the facility when it was in Darien. The appreciation of its many residents was heartfelt and resulted in 1896 in the planting of a tree which was then moved from the Gettysburg Battlefield where it grew on Little Round Top to the Darien site of Fitch's Home. A plaque describing the gift of this tree was erected near the tree in 1925.

The tree planted and dedicated this year on Memorial Day by the Monuments and Ceremonies Committee was a replacement for the earlier tree.



Digging in to preserve history are members of the Darien Monuments and Ceremonies Committee, from left, Lawrence Nardine, Robert E. Fatterley, Henry M. Sanders, Karen Polett, Lynn Hanks, Philip A. Morehouse, Jantina Atkinson, Charles Scribner, Anthony Improta and John Rooney.